

Dear Community Affairs

I am writing to you to lodge my concerns to the proposed budget cuts under the 'Better Access to Mental Health' Medicare Scheme.

I am a 6 year university trained psychologist with a Masters in Counselling Psychology. I have 12 years experience as a psychologist and I currently work in private practice.

I am currently working towards specialist endorsement through the APS Counselling College as a Counselling Psychologist which will then mean I can apply for 'specialist endorsement' in Counselling Psychology through the Psychology Board of Australia.

Furthermore, I have received advanced university training in psychopathology, including the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of individuals with moderate to severe mental illness. Continuing professional development is of utmost importance to me and I regularly attend professional development workshops and participate in regular supervision by a Counselling/Clinical Psychologist.

I wanted to note my concerns with the (a) proposed budget cuts to the Better Access to Mental Health Medicare Scheme; (b) the current two tier system under Medicare for Psychologists.

Firstly, in response to (a) I would like to lodge my significant level of concern in relation to the proposed reduction in the number of sessions available to individuals under Medicare. I am aware there is a significant body of research in relation to this which has been highlighted by my colleagues and I am very concerned that this would lead to poorer psychological health outcomes for individuals.

In relation to (b) the current two tier system for psychologists under Medicare, recent research by Melbourne University (2011) completed on the 'Better Access to Mental Health Medicare' scheme, indicated **no significant difference between 'generalist' and 'clinical' psychologists in treatment methodology or treatment outcomes for individuals seeking help through this scheme.**

Based on the above findings, wouldn't it make more sense to relinquish the two tier Medicare system and make psychological services accessible and equitable for all individuals? Furthermore, it would allow the Government to continue funding the current arrangement in relation to the number of sessions available to individuals under Medicare.

Yours sincerely

Zoe Leavitt